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UTILITY PATENT APPLICATION TRANSMITTAL

(Only for new nonprovisional applications under 37 CFR 1.53(b))

Attorney Docket No. 004259.P006

(maximum 12 characters)

First Named Inventor James Nichols

Title: Multimedia Transfer System

Express Mail Label No. EL627464998US

ADDRESS TO: Assistant Commissioner for Patents
Box Patent Application
Washington, D. C. 20231

APPLICATION ELEMENTS

See MPEP chapter 600 concerning utility patent application contents.

1. ☒ **Fee Transmittal Form (e.g., PTO/SB/17)**
(Submit an original, and a duplicate for fee processing)
2. ☐ **Applicant Claims Small Entity Status. (37 CFR 1.27)**
3. ☒ **Specification (Total Pages 27)**
(preferred arrangement set forth below)
 - Descriptive Title of the Invention
 - Cross Reference to Related Applications
 - Statement Regarding Fed sponsored R & D
 - Reference sequence listing, a table,
or a computer program listing appendix
 - Background of the Invention
 - Brief Summary of the Invention
 - Brief Description of the Drawings (if filed)
 - Detailed Description
 - Claim(s)
 - Abstract of the Disclosure
4. ☒ **Drawings(s) (35 USC 113) (Total Sheets 8)**
5. ☐ **Oath or Declaration (Total Pages)**
 - a. ☐ Newly Executed (Original or Copy)
 - b. ☐ Copy from a Prior Application (37 CFR 1.63(d))
(for Continuation/Divisional with Box 17 completed)
 - i. ☐ **DELETIONS OF INVENTOR(S)** Signed statement attached deleting inventor(s) named in the prior application, see 37 CFR 1.63(d)(2) and 1.33(b).
 - c. ☐ Unsigned.
6. ☐ **Application Data Sheet. (37 CFR 1.76)**
7. ☐ CD-ROM or CD-R in duplicate, large table or Computer Program (Appendix)
8. ☐ Nucleotide and/or Amino Acid Sequence Submission
(if applicable, all necessary)
 - a. ☐ Computer Readable Form (CRF)
 - b. ☐ Specification Sequence Listing on:
 - i. ☐ CD-ROM or CD-R (2 copies); or
 - ii. ☐ paper
 - c. ☐ Statement verifying identity of above copies

EL627464998US

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004259.P006

[illegible]

- 18A. If a CONTINUING APPLICATION, check appropriate box and supply the requisite information:**

(which is a ____ continuation/ ____ divisional/ ____ CIP of prior application no. _____,
which is a ____ continuation/ ____ divisional/ ____ CIP of prior application no. _____) (List entire chain of priority)

18B. Statement under 37 CFR 3.73(b) for continuing application:

19. Correspondence Address

X Correspondence Address Below

BLAKELY, SOKOLOFF, TAYLOR & ZAFMAN LLP

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Country U.S.A. TELEPHONE (408) 720-8300 FAX (408) 720-9397

Signature: Thomas Velster Date: 11/20/00

FEE TRANSMITTAL FOR FY 2001**TOTAL AMOUNT OF PAYMENT \$1402.00****Complete if Known:**Application No. Not Yet AssignedFiling Date HerewithFirst Named Inventor James NicholsGroup Art Unit Not Yet AssignedExaminer Name Not Yet AssignedAttorney Docket No. 04259.P006**METHOD OF PAYMENT (check one)**

1. ☒ The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge indicated fees and credit any over payments to:

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- ☒ Charge Any Additional Fee Required Under 37 CFR 1.16 and 1.17

- ☐ Applicant claims small entity status. See 37 CFR 1.27

2. ☒ Payment Enclosed: ☒ Check
☐ Credit Card
☐ Money Order
☐ Other

FEE CALCULATION**1. BASIC FILING FEE**

Large Entity		Small Entity		Fee Description	Fee Paid
Code	Fee (\$)	Code	Fee (\$)		
101	710	201	355	Utility application filing fee	\$710.00
106	320	206	160	Design application filing fee	
107	490	207	245	Plant filing fee	
108	710	208	355	Reissue filing fee	
114	150	214	75	Provisional application filing fee	

SUBTOTAL (1) \$710.00**2. EXTRA CLAIM FEES**

			Extra Claims	Fee from below	Fee Paid
Total Claims	54	- 20** =	34	X \$18.00 =	\$612.00
Independent Claims	4	- 3** =	1	X \$80.00 =	\$80.00
Multiple Dependent					

**Or number previously paid, if greater; For Reissues, see below.

Large Entity		Small Entity		Fee Description
Code	Fee (\$)	Code	Fee (\$)	
103	18	203	9	Claims in excess of 20
102	80	202	40	Independent claims in excess of 3
104	270	204	135	Multiple dependent claim, if not paid
109	80	209	40	**Reissue independent claims over original patent
110	18	210	9	**Reissue claims in excess of 20 and over original patent

SUBTOTAL (2) \$ 692.00

FEE CALCULATION (continued)**3. ADDITIONAL FEES**

<u>Large Entity</u>		<u>Small Entity</u>		<u>Fee Description</u>	<u>Fee Paid</u>
<u>Fee Code</u>	<u>Fee (\$)</u>	<u>Fee Code</u>	<u>Fee (\$)</u>		
105	130	205	65	Surcharge - late filing fee or oath	_____
127	50	227	25	Surcharge - late provisional filing fee or cover sheet	_____
139	130	139	130	Non-English specification	_____
147	2,520	147	2,520	For filing a request for ex parte reexamination	_____
112	920*	112	920*	Requesting publication of SIR prior to Examiner action	_____
113	1,840*	113	1,840*	Requesting publication of SIR after Examiner action	_____
115	110	215	55	Extension for reply within first month	_____
116	390	216	195	Extension for reply within second month	_____
117	890	217	445	Extension for reply within third month	_____
118	1,390	218	695	Extension for reply within fourth month	_____
128	1,890	228	945	Extension for reply within fifth month	_____
119	310	219	155	Notice of Appeal	_____
120	310	220	155	Filing a brief in support of an appeal	_____
121	270	221	135	Request for oral hearing	_____
138	1,510	138	1,510	Petition to institute a public use proceeding	_____
140	110	240	55	Petition to revive - unavoidable	_____
141	1,240	241	620	Petition to revive - unintentional	_____
142	1,240	242	620	Utility issue fee (or reissue)	_____
143	440	243	220	Design issue fee	_____
144	600	244	300	Plant issue fee	_____
122	130	122	130	Petitions to the Commissioner	_____
123	130	123	130	Petitions related to provisional applications	_____
126	180	126	180	Submission of Information Disclosure Stmt	_____
581	40	581	40	Recording each patent assignment per property (times number of properties)	_____
146	710	246	355	For filing a submission after final rejection (see 37 CFR 1.129(a))	_____
149	710	249	355	For each additional invention to be examined (see 37 CFR 1.129(b))	_____
179	710	279	355	Request for Continued Examination (RCE)	_____
169	900	169	900	Request for expedited examination of a design application	_____
Other fee (specify) _____					_____
Other fee (specify) _____					_____

SUBTOTAL (3) \$ 0

*Reduced by Basic Filing Fee Paid

SUBMITTED BY:

Typed or Printed Name: Thomas C. Webster
Signature: Thomas Webster Date: 11/20/00
Reg. Number: 46,154 Telephone Number: 408-720-8300

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UNITED STATES PATENT APPLICATION

for

MULTIMEDIA TRANSFER SYSTEM

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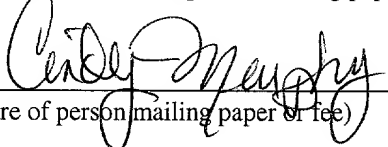
Attorney's Docket No. 04259.P006

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Date of Deposit November 20, 2000

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MULTIMEDIA TRANSFER SYSTEM

BACKGROUND

Field of the Invention

5 This invention relates generally to the field of digital audio/video storage and playback systems. More particularly, the invention relates to a compact disc system in which digital audio/video content is stored, indexed and played back from a mass storage device such as a hard drive.

Description of the Related Art

10 Various types of high capacity compact disc (hereinafter "CD") and digital video disc ("DVD") players have been developed over the years. These players typically include a rotary carousel or, alternatively, a plug-in cartridge with a plurality of slots for holding CD/DVDs to be played. Some more advanced CD/DVD players/changers are capable of storing several hundred CD/DVDs at
15 one time.

 There are several drawbacks associated with these devices, however. First, as the number of CD/DVDs that a CD/DVD player can accommodate increases, so does the size of the CD/DVD player. Accordingly, CD/DVD players which are capable of storing 100 or more CD/DVDs are typically require
20 large and bulky, requiring a significant amount of shelf space.

In addition, once a user loads all of his CD/DVDs into one of these high-capacity players, his CD/DVDs are no longer easily accessible. In order to remove a particular CD/DVD from his player, a user may need to search through several hundred CD/DVDs to find the one he needs. Accordingly, this

5 type of system may be burdensome to users who need to swap out their CD/DVDs on a regular basis (e.g., users who own a car CD/DVD player).

Finally, these “high-capacity” systems present a serious limitation in that the user cannot add CD/DVDs to the unit once the user reaches the storage capacity of the unit. Thus, said systems are impractical for cataloging growing media

10 libraries.

SUMMARY

A multimedia transfer apparatus is described comprising: a plurality of media readers; one or more encoder modules configured to encode data read by the media readers in a specified encoding format; and a data communication
5 interface configured to copy the encoded data to a media storage and playback apparatus.

Also described is a means for combining a plurality of said multimedia transfer apparatus together to form a homogenous processing ensemble of correspondingly higher capacity and throughput.

10 Also described is a computer-implemented method for transferring multimedia content comprising: reading first multimedia data from a first CD/DVD; encoding the first multimedia data to produce first encoded data in parallel with reading multimedia data from a second CD/DVD; encoding the second multimedia data to produce second encoded data; and transmitting the
15 first and second encoded data to a multimedia storage and playback apparatus.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

A better understanding of the present invention can be obtained from the following detailed description in conjunction with the following drawings, in which:

5 **FIG. 1** illustrates one embodiment of a CD/DVD storage apparatus communicating to a server over a network.

FIG. 2 illustrates another embodiment of a CD/DVD storage apparatus communicating to a server via a wireless transmission medium.

10 **FIG. 3** illustrates one embodiment of a system in which a server communicates specific information to and from a CD/DVD storage apparatus.

FIG. 4 illustrates another embodiment of a system in which a server communicates specific information to and from a CD/DVD storage apparatus.

FIG. 5 illustrates one embodiment of a multimedia transfer apparatus.

15 **FIG. 6** illustrates concurrent read and encoding operations according to one embodiment of the invention.

FIG. 7 illustrates a hardware architecture employed in one embodiment of a multimedia transfer apparatus.

FIG. 8 illustrates a plurality of multimedia transfer apparatus cooperatively interconnected over a network.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

In the following description, for the purposes of explanation, numerous specific details are set forth in order to provide a thorough understanding of the present invention. It will be apparent, however, to one skilled in the art that the present invention may be practiced without some of these specific details. In other instances, well-known structures and devices are shown in block diagram form to avoid obscuring the underlying principles of the invention.

EMBODIMENTS OF A COMPACT DISC AND DIGITAL VIDEO DISC STORAGE AND PLAYBACK SYSTEM

In **Figure 1** a CD/DVD storage and playback system 100 according to one embodiment of the invention is illustrated. The system 100 includes a storage and playback apparatus 105 which communicates over a network 140 to one or more servers 150.

In one embodiment, the storage and playback apparatus 105 includes a CD/DVD drive 105 for reading digital data stored on a user's CDs/DVDs, a mass storage device 130 (e.g., such as a hard drive), a display 140, and an interface card 120 for communicating to other devices (e.g., server 150) over a network 140.

In operation, a user loads each of his CDs/DVDs in the apparatus 105 via the CD/DVD drive 105 tray. The apparatus 105 includes logic which, in one embodiment, automatically copies all of the CD/DVD audio/video data to the

mass storage device 130 in compressed/encoded format. Alternatively, one embodiment allows the user to select only certain tracks from the CD/DVD to be copied to the mass storage device 130. When the user subsequently decides to listen to an audio CD, the audio content is readily available on the mass storage device 130.

Accordingly, the present system solves many of the problems associated with high capacity CD/DVD players. Hundreds (or even thousands) of CDs/DVDs may be stored on mass storage device 130 without a corresponding increase in the size of the storage and playback apparatus 105. For example, if a hard drive is used as mass storage device 130, then all of a user's CD/DVDs may be compressed and stored on a playback apparatus 105 smaller than a notebook computer. In addition, once a user has loaded his CD/DVD collection onto the playback apparatus 105, he is free to use his CDs/DVDs in other places (e.g., in a DiscMan™, a car CD/DVD player, or a portable MP-3 audio player such as the Diamond RIO).

In one embodiment of the system 100, the storage and playback apparatus 105 includes an interface unit 120 which allows the apparatus 105 to communicate with a server 150 over a network 140. In this embodiment, when a user loads a new CD/DVD into the apparatus 105, the apparatus 105 will transmit CD/DVD identification data to server 150 as illustrated in **Figure 3**. This identification data may be in the form of an ID number (e.g., the disc's serial

number) or, if an ID number is unavailable, the track data for the CD/DVD may be sent to server 150 for identification purposes (i.e., a hashing function computed from the number of tracks combined with the length of each track will uniquely identify a CD/DVD). In one embodiment, a checksum calculated for a known unique portion of the CD/DVD is transmitted to the server 150 to identify the CD/DVD. Various other types of identification data may be transmitted to the server 150 consistent with the underlying principles of the invention.

Regardless of how CDs/DVDs are identified, a CD/DVD database on the server 150 is continually updated to contain the most recent information on released CDs/DVDs. Upon receiving CD/DVD identification data from the storage and playback apparatus 105, the server 150 will identify the CD/DVD and transmit CD/DVD-related information to the apparatus 105. This may include, for example, indexing data such as the title of the CD/DVD and the title of each track on the CD/DVD, the year the CD/DVD was released, the lyrics for each song, and various other types of CD/DVD-related data. One embodiment of the storage and playback apparatus 105 stores this information in a CD/DVD database on the mass storage device 130. If the descriptive information for this disc is not available on the remote server 150, the individual installing the content (e.g., a content installation technician) may upload the disc's stock keeping unit (SKU) and/or descriptive textual content information to server 150 (e.g., using an optical character reader (OCR) wand). Users will then be able to

locate specific CDs/DVDs and tracks on the playback apparatus 105 by searching through the CD/DVD database. In one embodiment, information relating to the CD/DVD and/or the track being played/selected is displayed on a display unit 140.

Another embodiment of a compact disc storage and playback system 200 is illustrated in **Figure 2**. In this embodiment, the storage and playback apparatus 105 communicates to a server 150 via a wireless communication channel 220 using wireless transmitters/receivers 210, 211. Numerous different transmission protocols/media may be used, including satellite broadcast, paging systems, cellular phone systems and/or FM radio sideband. The same types of CD/DVD information may be transmitted between server 150 and the storage and playback apparatus 105 in this embodiment. One additional benefit of this embodiment, however, is that it may be employed as a mobile system 200 and used, for example, in automobiles or in hand-held playback devices.

In addition to transmitting title/track data for CDs/DVDs copied to mass storage device 130, as illustrated in **Figure 4**, the server 150 in one embodiment of the system will also transmit music/video *content* to the storage and playback apparatus 105 and will allow a user to purchase the transmitted audio/video content if he/she desires. If a user purchases the content, the user will be registered as an owner of the content on server 150, and will then be permitted to download the content as many times as needed. Accordingly, if the user owns a

storage and playback apparatus 105 with a relatively small mass storage device 130 (e.g., a small, handheld device) then the user may selectively download only those CD/DVDs/tracks which the user currently wants stored on his device. Server 150 will keep track of the rest of the user's audio/video content to be
5 downloaded at the user's request.

If a wireless system such as the one illustrated in **Figure 2** is implemented, then the same music content may be concurrently broadcast to a plurality of different storage and playback apparatuses 105. Those users who decide to purchase the transmitted audio/video content will automatically be registered
10 on server 150 and the transmitted content will remain on those playback devices 105. If, however, a user decides not to purchase the music content, then the content will automatically be deleted from the user's playback device 105.

In one embodiment, although the same music content may be broadcast to a plurality of different users, only specific songs included within the broadcast
15 will be played for individual users. The specific songs to be played may be selected based on the musical preferences of each user. Moreover, user preferences may be determined in a variety of ways including, for example, through a registration process (e.g., when the user opens an account on server 150) and/or based on the prior musical content purchased by the user.

In an embodiment of the system in which the storage and playback apparatus 105 is employed in an automobile, music or other audio/video content may continually be transmitted and stored on mass storage device 130, even when the automobile is not running. The specific type of audio/video content to be transmitted at a particular time during the day or week may be variable based on users' preferences. For example, server 150 may be configured to transmit up-to-date traffic reports during the morning and evening hours before the user leaves home/work. The user will then receive an instant traffic report as soon as he starts his car up in the morning and/or evening. Once the user listens to the traffic report, server 150 may one again begin transmitting digital musical content to the storage and playback apparatus 105.

In one embodiment of the system, the user may remove the mass storage device 130 from the storage and playback apparatus 105. The mass storage device 130 of this embodiment may be a portable flash memory module, mini-CD or a mini-hard drive which can be removed and inserted into another music player device (e.g., a pair of portable headphones or a portable MP3 player). In addition, in one embodiment the storage device 130 is hot-swappable so that a user does not need to power down the storage and playback apparatus 105 before removing it.

EMBODIMENTS OF AN APPARATUS AND METHOD FOR TRANSFERRING MULTIMEDIA DATA

When a user purchases a CD/DVD storage and playback system 105 (or any other type of system capable of storing multimedia content), the user will subsequently need to copy his/her CD/DVD collection to the playback system's storage device 130. If the user has a standard CD/DVD drive, copying each CD/DVD may be quite time consuming, particularly if he/she has a large CD/DVD collection.

One embodiment of a CD/DVD transfer apparatus 510 for copying multimedia content from a collection of CDs/DVDs to a playback system 105 is illustrated in **Figure 5**. The CD/DVD transfer apparatus 510 is comprised generally of a stack of CD/DVD drives 511-515 optimized to read multimedia content from a plurality of CDs/DVDs. As described in greater detail below, one embodiment of the transfer apparatus 510 also includes encoders for compressing the data read from each CD/DVD (e.g., using digital encoding algorithms such as MPEG-2, MP3, AC-3 . . . etc) and a high speed interface for copying the encoded content to the playback apparatus 105.

When transferring multimedia content from a large number of CDs/DVDs, it may become difficult for users to keep track of the CD/DVD jewel cases which correspond to the CDs/DVDs inserted in the transfer apparatus 510. As illustrated in **Figure 5**, one embodiment of the transfer apparatus 510 includes a plurality of shelves 520-524 for temporarily storing the jewel cases as

CDs/DVDs are loaded into the apparatus 510. When a user inserts a new CD/DVD into a drive of the transfer apparatus 510, he/she may place the jewel case that corresponds to the CD/DVD on the shelf adjacent to the drive into which the CD/DVD was inserted. Accordingly, the illustrated shelf configuration provides a convenient, effective solution for tracking jewel cases for CDs/DVDs loaded into the transfer apparatus 510.

The shelves 520-524 may be repositioned within the transfer apparatus 510 when not in use. For example, in one embodiment, the sides of the shelves 520-524 are cooperatively mated with a set of guide rails or tracks (not shown) configured within the chassis of the loading apparatus 510. When the transfer apparatus 510 is not being used, the shelves 520-524 may be pushed along their respective guide rails/tracks into a locked position within the transfer apparatus 510. Various other retractable positions may be used to secure the shelves 520-524. For example, in one embodiment, the shelves 520-524 may be attached to the transfer apparatus 510 via a set of hinges and may fold into a locked position (e.g., parallel with the side of the transfer apparatus 510).

It should be understood that CD/DVD discs may be easily scratched and even damaged through careless handling. Further, the automated operation of CD/DVD stack 710/719 may present a pinching hazard to the content technician should a drive tray open in the immediate proximity of a currently open tray. For these reasons, one embodiment of the transfer apparatus 510 comprises

controlling logic for the CD/DVD drive stack 710-719 to ensure that a disc is not ejected unless there is no danger to the content technician or media. For example, the controlling logic may prevent the transfer apparatus 510 from ejecting a disc or tray located above a disc or tray that is currently open.

5 A content transfer service may be offered to users who purchase the playback apparatus 105 (e.g., the service may be offered by the individual or organization selling the playback apparatus 105). More specifically, according to one embodiment, a content installation technician will arrive at the user's home with a transfer apparatus 510 and transfer all of the user's multimedia content to
10 the playback apparatus 105 for the user. A handle 530 may be affixed to the top of the transfer apparatus 510 to aid in transporting the apparatus from one user location to the next. In addition, small wheels 599 may be extended from the rear corner of the unit to permit rolling the unit to the workplace via retractable handle 598 (somewhat like carry-on luggage.)

15 After multimedia content is transferred to the user's playback system 105 (or during the transfer process), any of the CD/DVD identification techniques described above may be used to identify CDs/DVDs copied to the system (e.g., via communication with a server 150 having a CD/DVD database). CD/DVD-related data (e.g., title, track information, CD/DVD indexing data . . . etc) may
20 then be downloaded to the playback system 105 and used to index the multimedia content.

One embodiment of the transfer apparatus is configured to read and process several CDs/DVDs in parallel. The speed with which data may be read from a CD/DVD is highly dependent on the quality/speed of the drives and the I/O interface used to connect the drives to the transfer apparatus 510. I/O

5 operations of this type are not typically CPU-intensive. By contrast, the speed with which the CD/DVD data is encoded is highly dependent on the processing power of the transfer apparatus 510 (e.g., the type/speed of the CPU and/or any encoder modules). With these factors in mind, one embodiment of the transfer apparatus 510 is configured to read from one set of CDs/DVDs at the same time
10 as it encodes another set of CDs/DVDs (i.e., the set previously read). **Figure 6** graphically illustrates an embodiment in which two CDs/DVDs are read at the same time as another two CDs/DVDs are encoded. For example, while data is read from discs 3 and 4, the data previously read from discs 1 and 2 is encoded. The encoded data is then transmitted over the interface 505 to the playback
15 system 105 where it is stored and indexed. Various numbers of read/encode operations may be performed concurrently (e.g., based on the processing power of the transfer apparatus and the speed of the CD/DVD interface).

A hardware architecture of one embodiment of the transfer apparatus is illustrated in **Figure 7**. This embodiment includes a plurality of CD or DVD
20 drives 710-719 capable of performing read operations many times faster than standard audio CD drives (e.g., at 32x a standard CD drive). The CD/DVD drives 710-719 communicate over an I/O interface 720 which, in one

embodiment, is a Small Computer System Interface ("SCSI"). However, various other interfaces (e.g., Ultra ATA, Enhanced IDE . . . etc) may be employed while still complying with the underlying principles of the invention.

The embodiment illustrated in **Figure 7** is further comprised of one or
5 more central processing units ("CPUs") 720, a main memory 725 (e.g., random access memory ("RAM") or other dynamic storage medium) and/or a non-volatile storage medium 740 (e.g., a hard drive, flash memory, . . . etc). The CPU(s) of one embodiment are Athlon™ processors from Advanced Micro
10 Devices ("AMD") running at clock speeds of 700 MHz or greater. However, various other processors may be employed in the system (e.g., Intel Pentium III® processors). In addition, one or more independent encoding processors 730-734 may be configured in the transfer apparatus 510 to efficiently encode multimedia content read from each of the CD/DVD drives (e.g., in MPEG-3, MPEG-2, AC3 or other digital encoding format). It should be noted, however, that
15 independent, hard-wired encoding modules are not required to comply with the underlying principles of the invention. For example, scheduling and encoding may be performed by software executed by the CPUs 620.

In one embodiment, a multitasking, multithreaded operating system such as Linux, or UNIX is executed on the transfer apparatus 510. A data transfer
20 program executed in this embodiment may be used to schedule the various I/O and encoding operations described herein. More particularly, when executed on

a system such as that illustrated in **Figure 7**, the steps of reading data from each of the CDs/DVDs, encoding the data and transmitting the data to the playback system 105 may be performed in a highly parallel fashion (e.g., as illustrated in **Figure 6**).

5 In one embodiment, the loading system 510 is electrically coupled to the playback apparatus 105 via a high speed serial interface such as an IEEE 1394 interface or an Ethernet interface. It should be noted, however, that various interfaces may be used to couple the playback apparatus with the loading apparatus 510 while still complying with the underlying principles of the invention (e.g., a wireless interface provided via IEEE 802.11b).

10 The embodiment illustrated in **Figure 8** comprises a plurality of transfer apparatus 510 interconnected by a high-speed local-area network 840 to form a processing ensemble or cluster 777. The several Loading Apparatus 510 combine under program control within each loading apparatus 510 to form a new homogenous loading apparatus 777 capable of correspondingly greater processing throughput in accordance with the number of loading apparatus 510 that comprise the processing cluster 777. In one embodiment, the formation of the processing cluster 777 is automatic; that is, it does not require any interaction with the content technician. Moreover, in one embodiment, one transfer apparatus 510 within cluster 777 is designated the master module, which supervises and coordinates interaction between the Server 150 and processing

cluster 777 (e.g., the downloading of CD/DVD information as described above).

Accordingly, in this embodiment, processing cluster 777 and transfer apparatus 510 present an identical interface as to Server 150 (e.g., via Network Interface 750).

5 Throughout the foregoing description, for the purposes of explanation, numerous specific details were set forth in order to provide a thorough understanding of the present system. It will be apparent, however, to one skilled in the art that the system and method may be practiced without some of these specific details. For example, although the transfer apparatus 510 is described
10 above in the context of a particular type of CD/DVD playback system 105 (e.g., illustrated in **Figures 1** through **4**), the apparatus 510 may be used to load multimedia content on virtually any system having a storage device. Moreover, various aspects of the invention may be employed with media other than CDs or DVDs (e.g., MiniDiscs™, digital audio tapes (“DATs”), VHS tapes, . . . etc).
15 Accordingly, the scope and spirit of the invention should be judged in terms of the claims which follow.

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1 1. A multimedia transfer apparatus comprising:
2 a plurality of media readers;
3 one or more encoder modules configured to encode data read by said
4 media readers in a specified encoding format; and
5 a data communication interface configured to copy said encoded data to a
6 media storage and playback apparatus.

1 2. The multimedia transfer apparatus as in claim 1 wherein said encoder
2 modules are comprised of hardwired logic.

1 3. The multimedia transfer apparatus as in claim 2 further comprising:
2 a central processing unit for executing a transfer program, said transfer
3 program scheduling reading of said data by said media readers and encoding of
4 said data by said encoder modules.

1 4. The multimedia transfer apparatus as in claim 3 wherein said transfer
2 program schedules reading and encoding in parallel.

1 5. The transfer apparatus as in claim 1 wherein said media readers are
2 CD drives adapted to read data from CDs.

1 6. The transfer apparatus as in claim 1 wherein said media readers are
2 DVD drives adapted to read data from DVDs.

1 7. The transfer apparatus as in claim 5 further comprising:

2 one or more shelves coupled to said multimedia transfer apparatus for
3 temporarily supporting jewel cases for CDs inserted in said CD drives.

1 8. The transfer apparatus as in claim 7 wherein said shelves are
2 moveably engaged with a set of guide rails within said transfer apparatus and
3 wherein said shelves may be positioned within said transfer apparatus by
4 moving along said guide rails.

1 9. The transfer apparatus as in claim 7 further comprising retractable
2 wheels rotatably coupled to said transfer apparatus to facilitate transporting said
3 transfer apparatus.

1 10. The transfer apparatus as in claim 9 further comprising an extendable
2 handle fixedly coupled to said transfer apparatus to facilitate transporting the
3 transfer apparatus.

1 11. The transfer apparatus as in claim 1 wherein said data communication
2 interface is an IEEE 1394 interface.

1 12. The transfer apparatus as in claim 1 wherein said data communication
2 interface is an Ethernet interface.

1 13. The transfer apparatus as in claim 1 wherein said specified encoding
2 format is MP3.

1 14. The transfer apparatus as in claim 1 wherein said specified encoding
2 apparatus is MPEG-2.

1 15. The transfer apparatus as in claim 1 further comprising control logic
2 to prevent ejecting any disc or opening any tray at such time that would
3 endanger the operator or media.

1 16. A multimedia transfer system comprising a plurality of multimedia
2 transfer apparatus as in claim 1 interconnected via local high-speed network to
3 form an integrated processing ensemble of higher capacity.

1 17. A multimedia transfer apparatus comprising:
2 media reading means for reading multimedia data from a particular
3 media format;
4 encoding means for encoding said data; and
5 multimedia transfer means for transmitting said multimedia data to a
6 multimedia playback and storage apparatus.

1 18. The multimedia transfer apparatus as in claim 17 wherein said
2 encoding means is comprised of hardwired logic.

1 19. The multimedia transfer apparatus as in claim 18 further comprising:
2 scheduling means for scheduling reading of said data by said media
3 reading means and encoding of said data by said encoding means.

1 20. The multimedia transfer apparatus as in claim 19 wherein said
2 scheduling means schedules reading and encoding in parallel.

1 21. The transfer apparatus as in claim 17 wherein said media reading
2 means are CD drives and said media format is a CD format.

1 22. The transfer apparatus as in claim 17 wherein said media reading
2 means are DVD drives adapted to read data from DVDs.

1 23. The transfer apparatus as in claim 21 further comprising:
2 one or more support means coupled to said multimedia transfer
3 apparatus for temporarily supporting jewel cases for CDs inserted in said CD
4 drives.

1 24. The transfer apparatus as in claim 23 wherein said support means are
2 moveably engaged with a set of guide rails within said transfer apparatus and
3 wherein said shelves may be positioned within said transfer apparatus by
4 moving along said guide rails.

1 25. The transfer apparatus as in claim 17 wherein said multimedia
2 transfer means is comprised of an IEEE 1394 interface.

1 26. The transfer apparatus as in claim 17 wherein said multimedia
2 transfer means is comprised of an Ethernet interface.

1 27. The transfer apparatus as in claim 17 wherein said specified encoding
2 format is MP3.

1 28. The transfer apparatus as in claim 17 wherein said specified encoding
2 apparatus is MPEG-2.

1 29. A computer-implemented method for transferring multimedia
2 content comprising:
3 reading first multimedia data from a first CD/DVD;

4 encoding said first multimedia data to produce first encoded data in
5 parallel with reading multimedia data from a second CD/DVD;
6 encoding said second multimedia data to produce second encoded data;
7 and
8 transmitting said first and second encoded data to a multimedia storage
9 and playback apparatus.

1 30. The method as in claim 29 further comprising:
2 identifying said first CD/DVD and said second CD/DVD in a CD/DVD
3 database; and
4 reading CD/DVD-related data for said first CD/DVD and said second
5 CD/DVD from said CD/DVD database.

1 31. The method as in claim 30 further comprising:
2 storing said CD/DVD-related data on said storage and playback
3 apparatus.

1 32. The method as in claim 30 wherein said CD/DVD-related data is title
2 and track data for said first CD/DVD and said second CD/DVD.

1 33. The method as in claim 29 further comprising:
2 reading third multimedia data from a third CD/DVD in parallel with
3 reading said first multimedia data from said first CD/DVD;
4 encoding said third multimedia data to produce third encoded data in
5 parallel with reading multimedia data from said second CD/DVD and a fourth
6 CD/DVD;
7 encoding said second and fourth multimedia data to produce second and
8 fourth encoded data, respectively; and

transmitting said first, second, third and fourth data to a multimedia storage and playback apparatus.

34. The method as in claim 33 further comprising:
identifying said first, second, third and fourth CD/DVD in a CD/DVD database; and
reading CD/DVD-related data for said first, second, third and fourth CD/DVD from said CD/DVD database.

35. The method as in claim 34 further comprising:
storing said CD/DVD-related data on said storage and playback apparatus.

36. The method as in claim 30 further comprising using an optical character reader (OCR) wand to capture identifying content from a CD/DVD when said CD/DVD cannot be identified in said CD/DVD database.

37. The method as in claim 36 wherein said identifying content is a bar-coded SKU.

38. The method as in claim 36 further comprising updating said CD/DVD database with said identifying content.

39. A method for providing a multimedia transfer service comprising:
transporting a multimedia transfer device to a user's home, said user having a collection of multimedia content stored on physical media; and
using said multimedia transfer device to transfer said multimedia content from said physical media to a mass storage device at said user's home.

1 40. The method as in claim 39 further comprising:
2 indexing said multimedia content on said mass storage device on behalf of
3 said user.

1 41. The method as in claim 40 wherein indexing comprises:
2 identifying said multimedia content with a code transmitted over a
3 network link from said user's home to a multimedia content database; and
4 downloading information related to said multimedia content from said
5 multimedia content database.

1 42. The method as in claim 41 wherein said code is a hashing code
2 identifying said multimedia content using a fingerprint of said multimedia
3 content.

1 43. The method as in claim 41 wherein said information related to said
2 multimedia content includes a title of said multimedia content and/or track data
3 for said multimedia content.

1 44. The method as in claim 41 wherein said information related to said
2 multimedia content includes album cover information.

1 45. The method as in claim 41 wherein information related to said
2 multimedia content includes song lyrics.

1 46. The method as in claim 41 wherein information related to said
2 multimedia content includes information about artists who created said
3 multimedia content.

1 47. The method as in claim 41 wherein information related to said
2 multimedia content includes interactive content.

1 48. The method as in claim 39 wherein said physical media is a compact
2 disk ("CD").

1 49. The method as in claim 39 wherein said physical media is a digital
2 video disk ("DVD").

1 50. The method as in claim 41 wherein downloading said information
2 occurs concurrently with transferring said multimedia content.

1 51. The method as in claim 41 wherein downloading said information
2 occurs after transferring said multimedia content.

1 52. The method as in claim 39 further comprising monitoring the
2 efficiency with which said multimedia content is transferred from said physical
3 media to said mass storage device.

1 53. The method as in claim 52 wherein efficiency is determined by
2 statistical analysis of performance parameters gathered during said transfer.

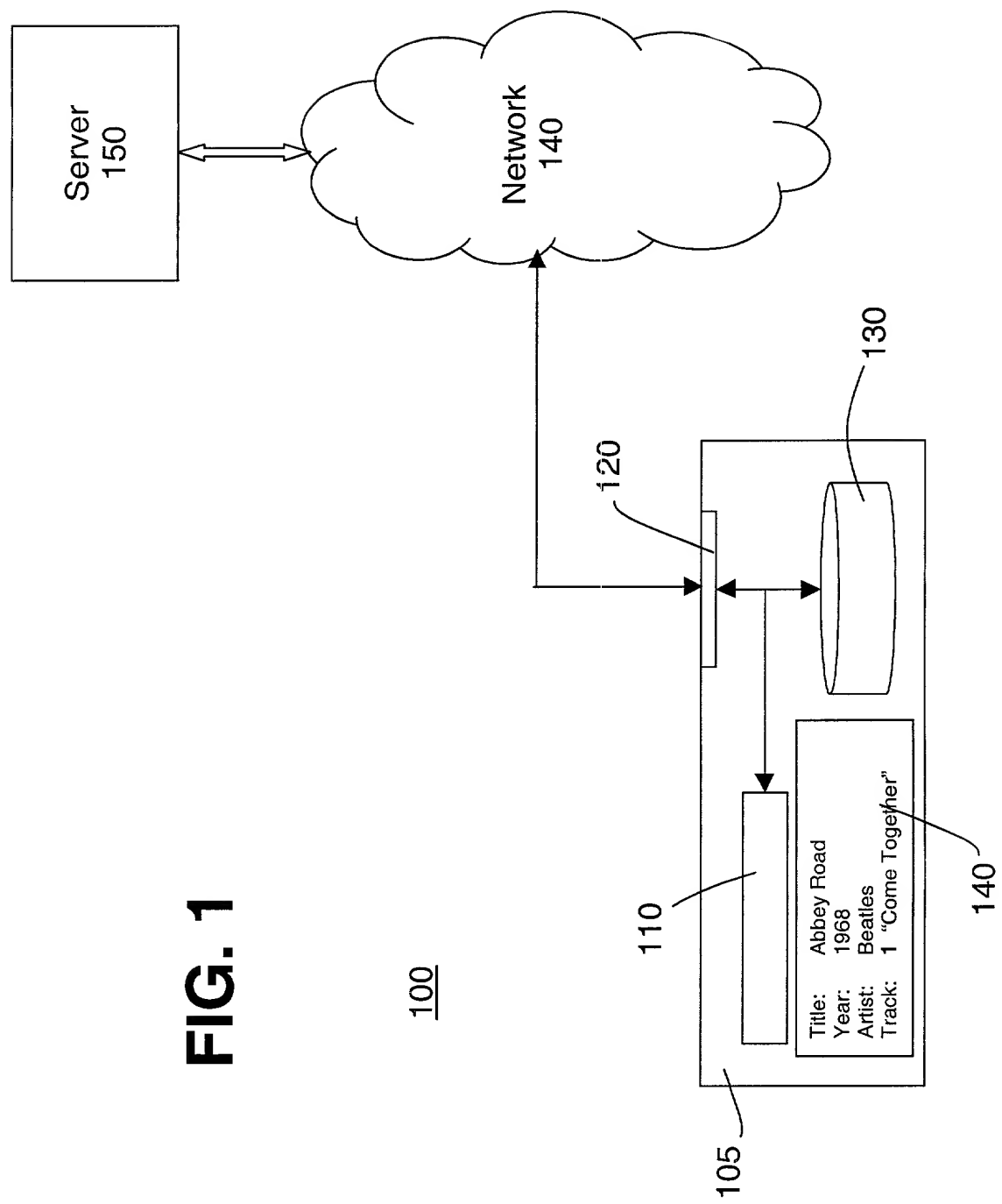
1 54. The method as in claim 53 wherein said performance parameters
2 include disc processing rate, transfer apparatus duty cycle, and a length of time
3 one or more individual drives of said transfer apparatus are empty.

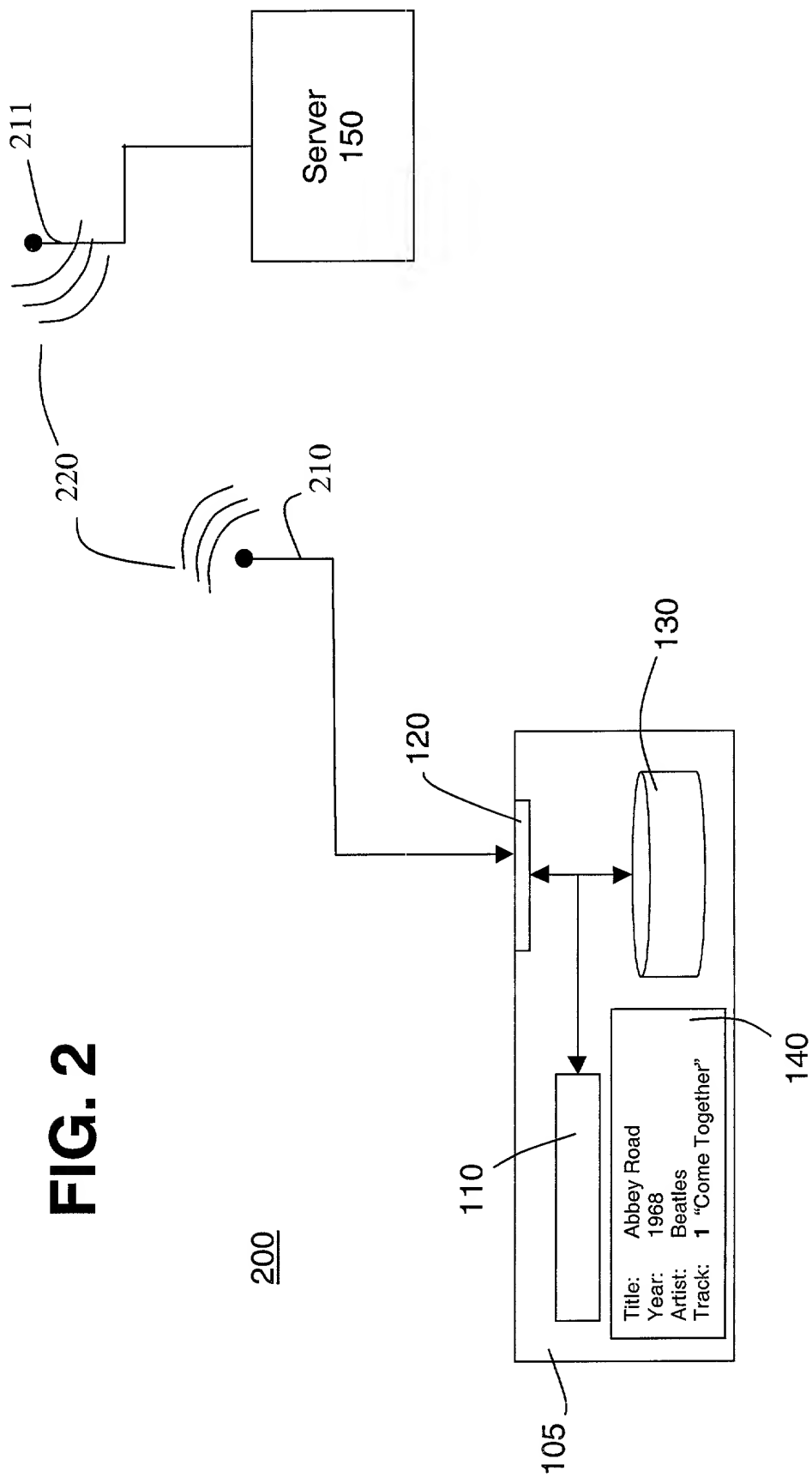
ABSTRACT

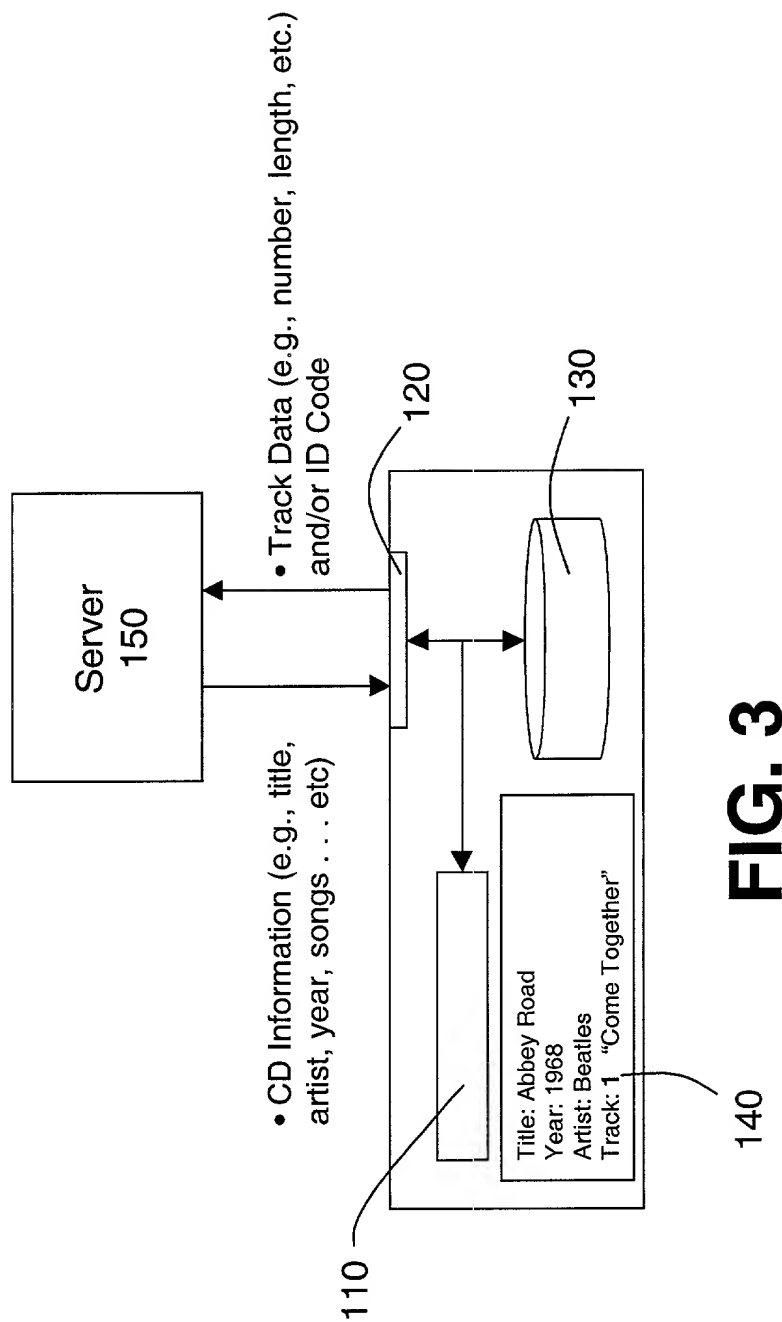
A multimedia transfer apparatus is described comprising: a plurality of media readers; one or more encoder modules configured to encode data read by the media readers in a specified encoding format; and a data communication
5 interface configured to copy the encoded data to a media storage and playback apparatus.

Also described is a computer-implemented method for transferring multimedia content comprising: reading first multimedia data from a first CD/DVD; encoding the first multimedia data to produce first encoded data in
10 parallel with reading multimedia data from a second CD/DVD; encoding the second multimedia data to produce second encoded data; and transmitting the first and second encoded data to a multimedia storage and playback apparatus.

FIG. 1







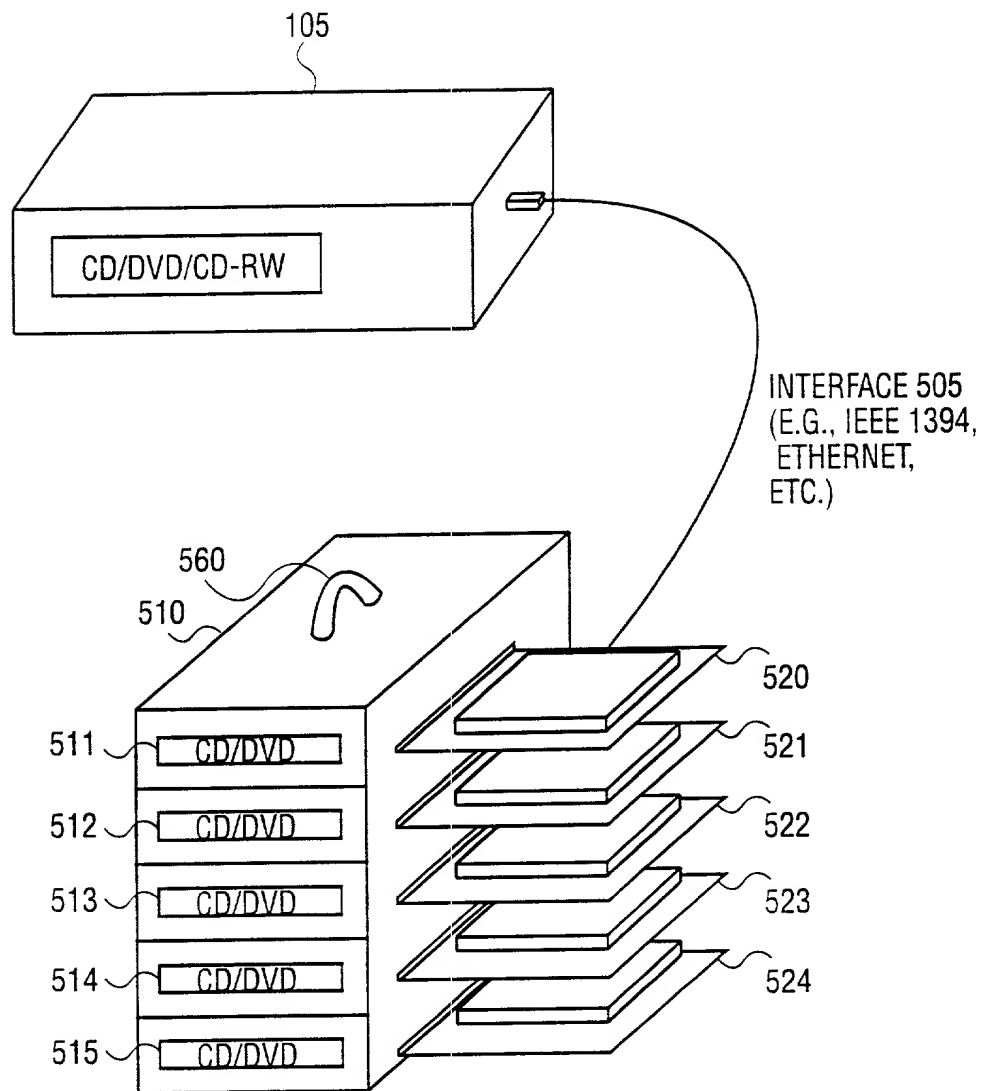


FIG. 5

FIG. 6 is a diagram illustrating a sequence of operations over time, showing a high CPU load period followed by a low CPU load period.

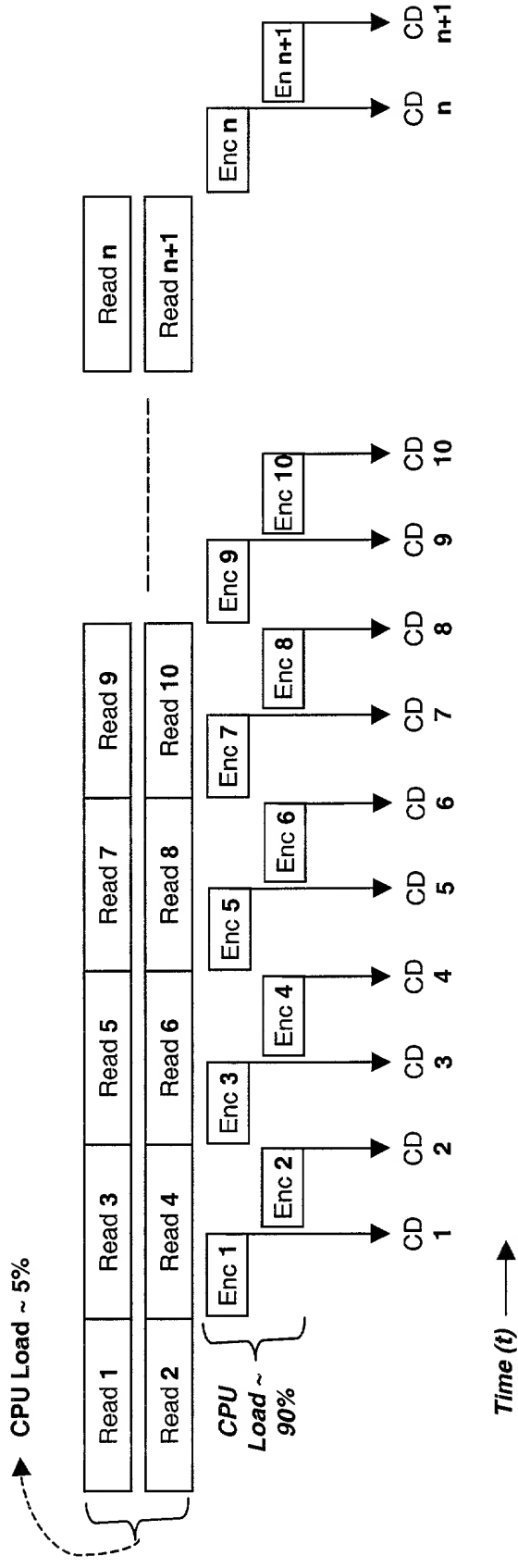


FIG. 6

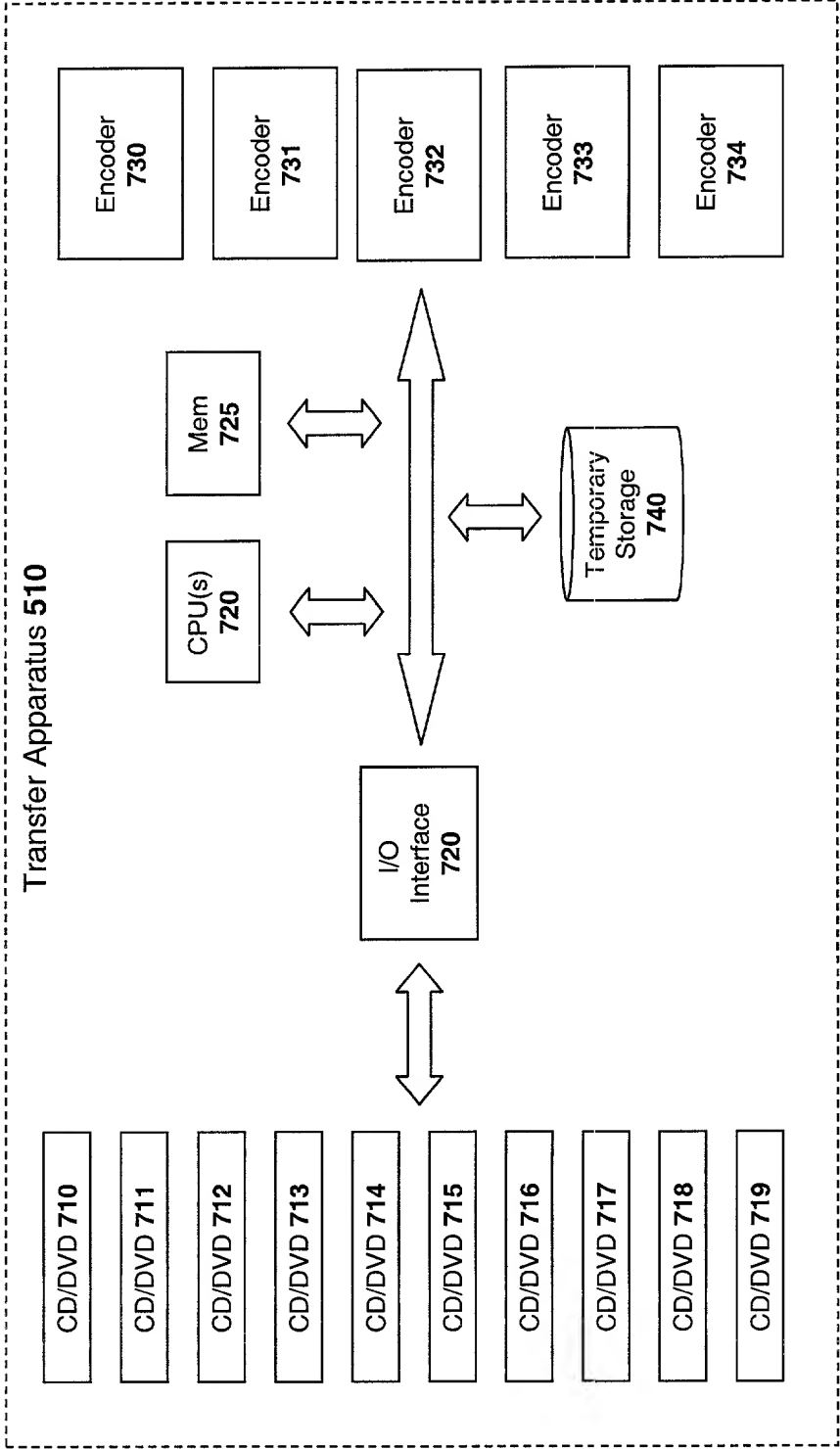


FIG. 7

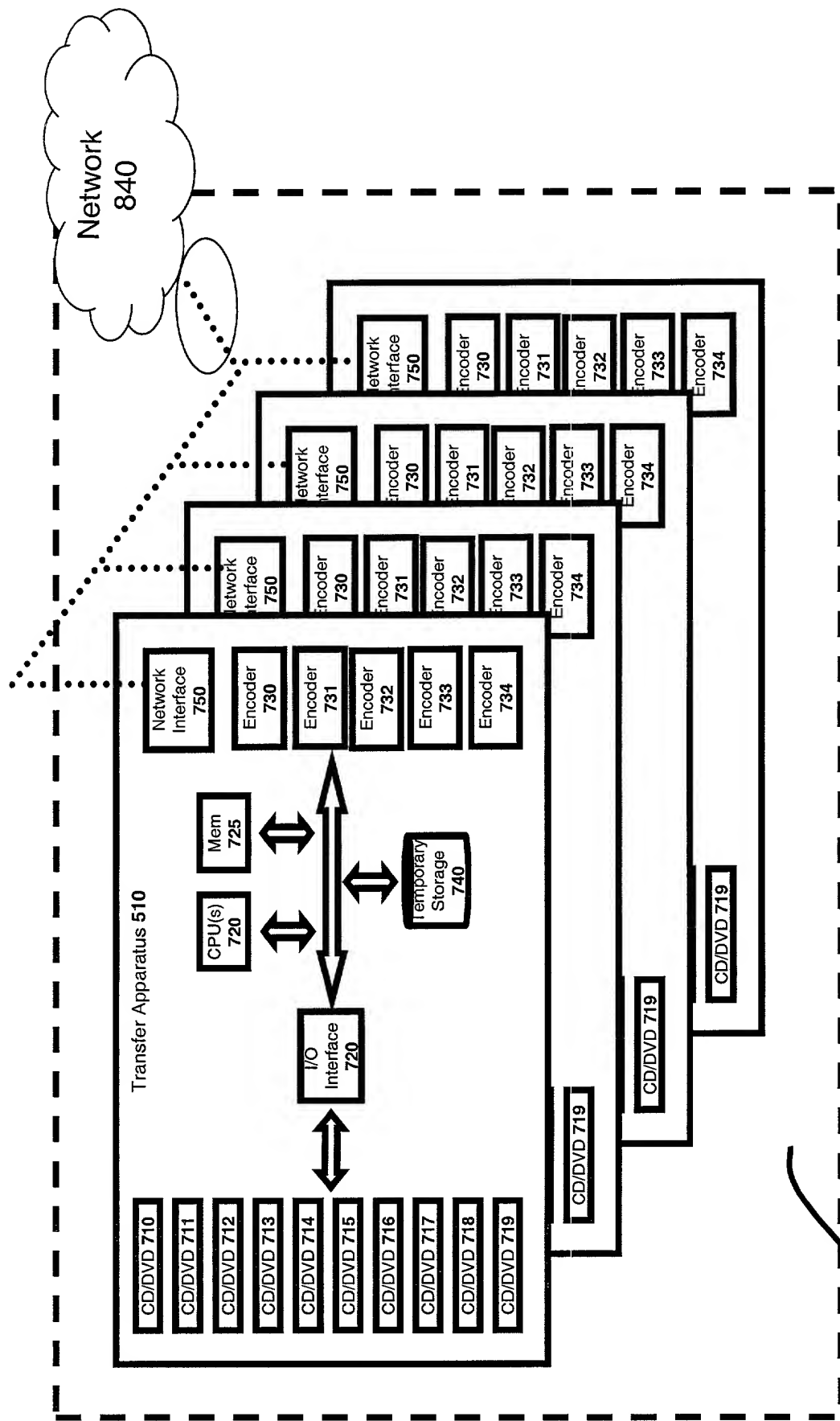


FIG. 8